Nocturnal Kirtans at the Ashram of Srivasa Thakura

SCENE ONE

(The devotees are assembled outside awaiting the arrival of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Lord Nityananda. Their mood is one of eager anticipation. Srivasa Thakur is especially anxious and he is busy making last minute arrangements.)

Srivasa: (to one of the devotees) So, are you absolutely sure that there will be sufficient prasad for all the prabhus? The cooking is completed and everything is in readiness?

Devotee: Yes, yes, prabhu, everything has been taken care of! The kirtana hall has been washed thoroughly with water, the Lord's seat and garland are ready and the cooked preparations are completely first class! Don't worry about anything!(pointing) Look! Here is Advaita Acarya!

(All of the devotees offer their obeisances as Advaita Acharya enters.)

Srivasa:: (embraces Advaita Acharya) Jai Prabhu, welcome to my humble home, everything is now auspicious by your presence. We are just expecting Sri Caitanya and Nityananda Prabhu at any moment.

Advaita: My dear Srivasa:, I accept your house as good as the spiritual world because the Lord Himself comes here every evening for kirtan. We all know that it is only on the strength of your devotion.

Srivasa:: Actually, I have no devotion, but it is only the causeless mercy of the Lord that brings Him here. He is the independent Personality of Godhead. Everything has become so wonderful since He has returned from Gaya

after taking His initiation.

Advaita:Yes, Srivasa Thakura, the change in Him is most astonishing. Before this, He was posing as a quarrelsome and puffed-up scholar, always arguing with us and challenging our Vaisnava philosophy. But now, He has revealed himself as the foremost devotee, the Personality of Godhead Himself. If God Himself comes as a devotee, who can be a greater devotee than He?

All: Jaya, jaya Sri Caitanya! Jaya Nityananda! Hari bol!! (All the devotees throw themselves to the ground,offering obeisances at the lotus feet of the two Brothers.)

Caitanya: (raising His arms) Hari Bol! Hari Bol! Hari Bol!

All: Hari Bol! (Srivasa:a garlands Lord Caitanya and Nityananda.)

Caitanya: Jai! Jai Sri Krsna! Let us all go inside immediately and begin the kirtan performance. Some of you make sure that these doors are locked so that the nonbelievers cannot enter to spoil the devotional mood of our chanting.
(Everyone leaves. Kirtan starts offstage.)

SCENE TWO Outside the Home of Srivasa Thakura

(A roaring kirtan tape plays. A Smarta Brahman comes, listens intensely at the door, he tries the door but it is locked. He feels very frustrated. Another Smarta Brahman comes along.)

2nd Smarta:Good evening, my friend! What's going on here, anyway?

1st Smarta: Ahhh (disgusted) it is nothing! It's just some fanatics having their crazy chanting and dancing behind closed doors.

2nd Smarta: Yes, so I've heard. Every night, they come here to the house of Srivasa Thakura and perform their secret rituals. They are all low class men, so coarse and rude that they never even invite us Brahmanas. It's disgusting! I wonder what they are doing in there!
(He tries to peek through a crack in the door.)

1st Smarta: It's useless! They've hung some kind of curtain on the door. From the sounds of it, they're chanting and dancing like madmen. (sarcastic) They're probably throwing themselves on the floor in fits of spiritual "ecstasy," jumping up, spinning and carrying on in all sorts of crazy ways! I wouldn't even stay here for a moment, but I would like to see what they do in there for once! (He peeks again.)

2nd Smarta: I know what you mean, but they always lock the doors on us! I too am practically burning from this insult to respectable brahmins! (He lowers his voice to speak confidentially.) And guess what? A few days ago, someone finally did something about it!

1st Smarta: Why, what do you mean?!

2nd Smarta: One local Brahman, our friend, (laughing)! Late the other night, Monday, to exact, he put all of the articles used in the worship of Mother Durga right here in front of the door of Srivasa's house, just to embarrass

him! After all, these so-called devotees can't be accepted as being on the same level with high grade brahmanas like you and me! They are more on the level of Durga Worshippers. (both laugh) So, just to show everyone the real character of Srivasa Thakura, he put the upper portion of a plantain leaf here, at his door, and placed turmeric, vermilion red sandalwood and rice on it. Then he purchased a pot of wine and put it next to that, (They both laugh.) just as if Srivasa Thakura were really worshipping the goddess Durga there! (both laugh hysterically) I wanted to congratulate Gopala Chapala since I heard about it, but he doesn't seem to be around. (He laughs but the 1st Smarta seems to have become somber about something.)

1st Smarta: You mean you haven't heard? About Gopala Chapala, I mean?

2nd Smarta: No, has something happened?

1st Smarta: Yes, I'm sorry to tell you that Gopala Chapala has now had to leave the village. He is sitting down on the bank of the Ganges. He has leprosy.

2nd Smarta:(greatly shocked) No! How terrible! When did this happen?

1st Smarta:The disease attacked him on Thursday. His whole body is now covered with bloody sores and germs and insects are biting him everywhere! His entire body is burning in distress! (thinking) Hmmmm, you know it's funny ...

2nd Smarta: Funny!?! What's so funny about leprosy?!!

1st Smarta:No, No, I mean it's just peculiar that the disease came just three days after he placed the Durga Puja articles here and tried to embarrass Srivasa Thakura.

2nd Smarta:(surprised) Why, do you think that there could be a connection between these two occurrences?

1st Smarta: Well, there are those who say these devotees are all great saints. (Both of them become a little stunned and glance again and again at the door in wonderment.)

2nd Smarta: Well, I for one am not going to stand here all night. I have better things to do. Whatever's going on here, I don't think we should take the matter into our own hands, the way Gopala Chapala did. Bleeding sores ... leprosy? (recovers his composure) This is a matter for the Kazi, the town magistrate; I shall go to him and personally present the facts as they are!

Good evening!

(2nd Smarta leaves and the 1st Smarta stands for a moment more, looking at the locked door, tries one more peek through the crack, then leaves, shaking his head.)

SCENE THREE- Inside the House of Srivasa Thakura

Caitanya: Jai! Jai Sri Krsna! Stop the kirtan! By the Lord's grace, that was a wonderful kirtan!

All: Hari Bol! Hari Bol!

Caitanya: However, the atmosphere does not seem right, somehow. It is as if a non-believer were present tonight.

(The devotees look about. Srivasa Thakura is especially concerned. Soon, Srivasa Thakura finds his mother-in-law hiding under a table.)

Srivasa:: Mataji! I told you that this kirtan was very private!

Mataji: I'm not hurting anything. I just wanted to see for myself what all the fuss was about!

Srivasa:: Nevertheless, you must go to your own home now.

(He sees her out.) I'm sorry, Lord Caitanya! My wife's mother was just curious. It won't happen again.

Caitanya: That is alright. We will take a short break and have a meeting. Now that many devotees have come from all over the country to join our party here in Navadwip, we have is not enough. We should never be content just to enjoy the ecstasy of devotional service ourselves, but should try as far as possible to spread it to all of the suffering souls. So, now I am making a new program. First of all, my two chief whips are Nityananda Prabhu and Haridasa Thakur.

(He places His hands affectionately on them.)

So, I am asking You both to go from door to door, from house to house, and humbly beg every man you meet to chant the Holy Names of Krsna.

All: Hari Bol! Jai Sri Krsna!

Caitanya: Every evening you should return to Me and tell Me about the day's preaching activities. What's more, I now want all of the devotees to take the chanting of the Holy Names out into the streets and market places. We have kept this nectar to ourselves long enough, now we must distribute it to everyone, and force them to drink this delicious nectar of the Holy Names!

All: Hari Bol! Hari Bol! Hari Bol!

Caitanya: Now, more kirtan! Hari! Jai Sri Krsna! Hari Bol!
(Lights out, music, change scenery)

SCENE FOUR

Narrator: (over kirtan . Sri Caitanya and Nityananda Prabhu are dancing.)Another time, just after Lord Caitanya converted the Muslim magistrate, Chand Kazi, the two brothers were dancing in the house of Srivasa Thakura when a calamity took place. Srivasa Thakura's son died. Yet Srivasa Thakura was so patient that he did not allow anyone to express sorrow by crying because he did not want the kirtan to be disturbed. But, when the kirtan was over, Sri Caitanya, who could understand the situation declared:

Caitanya: There must have been some calamity in this house.

Devotee: Oh, Sri Caitanya, the son of Srivasa Thakura, who has been suffering from a disease, has passed away tonight.

Caitanya: Why was I not informed earlier? Take me to where the son's body lies.

Devotee:He is this way, Lord. (They approach a bed to the side.)

Caitanya: My dear boy, why are you leaving the house of Srivasa Thakur?

Son: I was living in this house as long as I was destined to live here. Now that the time is over, I am going elsewhere, according to Your direction. I am Your eternal servant, a dependant living being. I must act only according to Your desire. Beyond Your desire, I cannot do anything. I have no such power.

Caitanya: Srivasa:, You have lost one son, but Nityananda and I are your

eternal Sons. We shall never be able to give up your company.

Narrator: This is an instance of a transcendental loving relationship with Krsna. We have eternal transcendental relationships with Krsna as His servants, friends, fathers, sons or conjugal lovers. When the same relationships are reflected in the material world, we have relationships as the sons, fathers, friends, lovers, masters or servants of others, but all these relationships are subject to termination within a short period. If we revive our Krsna Consciousness our eternal relationships will never break to cause us lamentation. Thereafter, the Lord charitably bestowed His benediction upon all His devotees. He gave the remnants of His food to Srivasa Thakura's niece, Narayani, showing her special respect. She later became the mother of Sri Vrndavana dasa Thakur who wrote the Sri Caitanya Bhagavat.

Caitanya: Go on chanting! Chant! Dance!
(An ecstatic kirtan is performed. After some time He addresses Srivasa Thakura in ecstasy.) Srivasa:, please deliver to Me My flute!

Srivasa:: (over kirtan) Your flute has been stolen away by the gopis!

Caitanya: Go on talking! Go on talking!

Narrator: To increase the ecstasy of Sri Caitanya, Srivasa Thakura described the transcendental mellow pastimes of Sri Vrindavan to Sri Caitanya. Srivasa Thakura went on to extensively explain how the gopis were attracted to the forests of Vrndavana by the vibration of Krsna's flute and how they wandered together in the forest. He narrated all the pastimes enacted during the six changing seasons. He described the drinking of honey, the celebration of the rasa dance, the swimming in the Yamuna and other such incidents. As thus the Lord requested and Srivasa:a Thakura spoke, the morning appeared and the Lord embraced Srivasa Thakura and satisfied him. Thus, Sri Caitanya chanted and danced every night in the home of Srivasa Thakura's for one year.

(Music)

SCENE FIVE Gopala Chapala Takes Shelter of Sri Caitanya

(Music)

Narrator: Since leprosy is an infectious disease, Gopala Chapala left the village to sit down on the bank of the Ganges underneath a tree. Incessantly covered with germs, with insects biting him all over his body, Gopala Chapala felt unbearable pain. His entire body burned in distress. One day, however, he saw Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu passing by and spoke to Him as follows.

Gopala: My dear nephew, I am Your maternal uncle in our village relationship. Please see how greatly this attack of leprosy has afflicted me! As an incarnation of God, You are delivering so many fallen souls. I am also a greatly unhappy fallen soul. Kindly deliver me by Your mercy.

Caitanya: (appearing to be angry) O sinful person, envious of pure devotees, I shall not deliver you! Rather, I will have you bitten by these germs for many millions of years! You have made Srivasa Thakura appear to have been worshipping the goddess Bhavani. Simply for this offense, you will have to fall down into hellish life for ten million births.

I have appeared in this incarnation to kill the demons and, after killing them, to preach the cult of devotional service. You have committed an offense at the lotus feet of Srivasa Thakura. First, you must go there and beg for his mercy, and then if he gives you his blessing and you do not commit such sins again, you will be delivered.

Narrator: Then, the brahmana, Gopala Chapala, went to Srivasa Thakura and took shelter of his lotus feet and by Srivasa Thakura’s mercy he was freed from all sinful reactions. The End